



Jutta Jokiranta, *Social identity and Sectarianism in the Qumran Movement* (Leiden: E.J. Brill), 2013.

The present volume is remarkably simple to summarize: utilizing the sociological underpinnings provided by the research of Weber, Wilson, Stark, and Bainbridge, Jokiranta opines that sects (in particular, the Qumran sect) is not characterized so much by a specific set of characteristics but rather along a continuum of characteristics.

Accordingly, using this methodological lens, J. discusses the religious viewpoint reflected in the sect's primary documents, *The Damascus Document* and the *Community Rule*. What J. discovers is that these documents are striving to construct a shared social identity and do not, in contrast to the opinion of many, prescribe the sect's life nor preserve guidelines for the structure of the community. Social identity and cultural memory are key.

Furthermore, J. believes, rightly or wrongly, that this social identity is on display in particular in the *pesharim*. These documents have as their peculiar purpose the inculcation of the sect's worldview in the lives of the sect's members. This suggests, for J., that the fact that the group seems to be facing adversity shows that their documents were attempting to find some sort of explanation for that adversity.

The book at hand is J.'s revised doctoral dissertation and consequently is quite technical indeed. Comprised of four chapters: an *Introduction*, *Serakhim and Sectarianism*, *Serakhim and Social Identity*, and *Pesharim and Sectarian Identity*, it is densely written and requires those making use of it to have a thorough working knowledge of both current sociological theory and Scrolls scholarship. It is not for the faint of heart nor for those who are looking for a beginner's guide. In short, it is first tier research meant for first tier researchers.

Precisely because it is a specialist's book, specialists in Scrolls research will find it to be quite important. It takes us in a new direction, with new tools, and it results in new findings which illuminate old questions as yet unsatisfactorily answered.

Its bibliography is amazingly contemporary with all of the major, current, cutting edge research included. The indices are ample as well. In sum this is a very 'full' volume both content-wise and in terms of the requisite helps.

I'll conclude with J.'s somewhat full concluding remarks, as they seem most apposite and offer potential readers the tone and flavor of the volume:

The developmental processes in the Qumran movement are, however, complex and wide-ranging, and this study has been able to touch upon only some of its aspects. Social identity is not unchangeable but transforms over the course of time and in relation to changes in the surrounding environment. However extreme a group may be, in other circumstances it can always become less extreme... The perception of continuity in the social identity is also necessary for the group, and this is the reason for the importance of collective memories and the content of those memories. I proposed that the righteous teacher is part of those collective memories to which the group assigns special importance and whose prototypical character it promotes as the content of the shared social identity (p. 220).

This volume is a challenge, and challenging.

Jim West
Quartz Hill School of Theology